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## Nexus 2014/15: Carver 150th, Cooperative Extension 100th, and 1890 Land Grant 125th Birth Year Anniversaries

Walter A. Hill

Tuskegee University, [hillwa@mytu.tuskegee.edu](mailto:hillwa@mytu.tuskegee.edu)

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**GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER PUBLIC HALL OF FAME BANQUET LECTURE  
PROFESSIONAL AGRICULTURAL WORKERS CONFERENCE, 2014**

**NEXUS 2014/2015:  
CARVER 150<sup>TH</sup>, COOPERATIVE EXTENSION 100<sup>TH</sup>, AND 1890 LAND GRANT 125<sup>TH</sup>  
BIRTH YEAR ANNIVERSARIES**

**\*Walter A. Hill<sup>1</sup>**

**<sup>1</sup>Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, AL**

**\*Email of author: hillwa@mytu.tuskegee.edu**

“If I have found favor in your eyes, my Lord, do not pass your servant by” Genesis 18: 3

George Washington Carver’s approximate birth year was 1864; thus the Tuskegee University family celebrated his 150<sup>th</sup> birth year during 2014-15. Carver’s early life’s journey took him to towns, cities, schools and farms in Missouri, Kansas, and Iowa prior to his acceptance in 1898 into Simpson College in Iowa to study art. He stayed at Simpson College for a brief period prior to being encouraged to study agriculture at Iowa State University. At Iowa State University Carver was an undergraduate student from 1891 to 1894, completed his master's degree and joined the faculty in 1896. Carver joined Tuskegee University in 1896 where he served as a faculty member, scientist, and administrator until he passed away in 1943.

Think about Carver’s life while in Iowa. He was the sole African American in the university and the local community. There may not have been a person he felt comfortable talking about the lynching that he had witnessed, or to whom he could share that his mother and he had been stolen by slave traders. Deep down was he seeking unconditional acceptance and love and did it seem unobtainable? Did he wonder about boundaries to his creativity where his leadership, mental prowess, and talents could be fully manifested if he remained in Iowa? Did he perceive a glass ceiling that would destine him to be forever “keeper of the greenhouse”? Could he have become head of a department or director of the experiment station? Why did Carver leave Iowa and go to Tuskegee in 1896? He had just become a member of the faculty having completed his M.S. degree. Carver answers in his own words:

- But I expect as I have already stated to go to my people;
- I have been looking for some time at Tuskegee with favor to go [as] it has always been the one ideal of my life to be of the greatest good for the greatest number of my people possible;
- And to this end I have been preparing myself for these many years feeling as I do that this line of education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom to our people;
- Pledge to Booker T. Washington to cooperate with you and doing all I can through Christ who strengthens me to better the condition of our people.

When Carver went to Tuskegee in 1896 to “better the condition” of his people the following conditions prevailed:

- the Reconstruction period had just ended;

- in 1880, there were 4,643 lynchings;
- from 1882 until 1966 Plessy vs. Ferguson segregation policy was the law of the land;
- in 1896, sharecropping and tenant farming dominated Black farming;
- Black land loss was rampant;
- migration north was the way out for many of “his people”;
- the Black population in AL was 45%; most were in poverty.

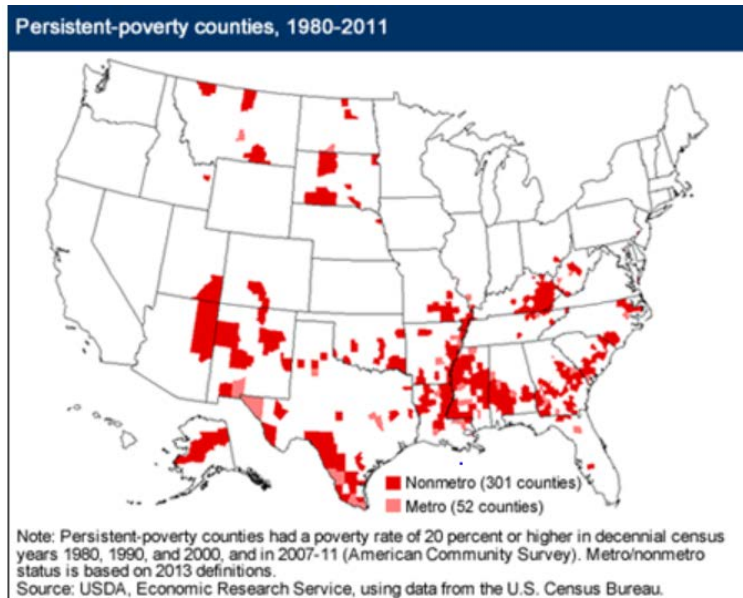


Figure 1. Persistent Poverty Counties in the U.S.

If we fast forward from 1896 to 2014, most of the persistent poverty areas in the United States have been in the South, including the Black Belt Region (Figure 1).

	% Black	Unemployment	% Below Poverty
United States	12.9	7.5	14.3
Alabama	26.3	6.6	19.0
Barbour	46.9	10.2	24.5
Bullock	70.2	10.9	32.8
Dallas	69.4	11.9	35.7
Greene	80.6	11.0	35.1
Lowndes	73.5	12.8	25.4
Macon	82.6	8.8	30.9
Perry	68.7	12.0	31.7
Sumter	75.0	9.4	39.1
Wilcox	72.5	15.6	39.9
Iowa	3.2	5.1	12.7

Figure 2. % Black, % Unemployment, and % Below Poverty

Figure 2 shows persistent poverty indicators in several Black Belt counties in Alabama and how they compare to Alabama as a whole, the United States, and Iowa. The relationship between percent poverty and percent unemployment are directly correlated with the percent Black

population. The numbers indicate up to 27 percentage points higher for poverty and up to 10 percentage points higher for unemployment for Black people than for white people.

The heart of Carver's work in going from Iowa to Alabama was to help his people and in so doing he ended up helping the world. The Carver Integrative Sustainability Center (CISC) which was opened in 2014 manifests Carver's work today at Tuskegee University through foci on science and research technologies and policies that enhance profitability and sustainability of small farms and rural communities. CISC gives priority foci to socially disadvantaged, minority, underserved farmers and communities, and functions in the tradition of George Washington Carver as a regional, national and international resource for developing and sharing modern, science-based, holistic, earth- and farmer and community-friendly agricultural innovations. The Center is fully integrative in disciplines and in terms of community engagement.

The year 2014 also represents the hundredth anniversary of the Cooperative Extension System. Note that Booker T. Washington started the farmer's conference in 1892 at Tuskegee University. Carver joined Tuskegee in 1896, and the Tuskegee agricultural experiment station was also established in 1896. Carver led a committee that designed the Wagon on Wheels in 1905.



Figure 3. Thomas Campbell, the Jesup Wagon and Historic Marker where Campbell was appointed as the first Demonstration Agent.

The Wagon on Wheels later named the Jessup Wagon was launched in 1906, and Thomas Campbell was appointed as the first demonstration agent in the United States, the forerunner of the Cooperative Extension System (Figure 3). The timeline for Cooperative Extension that was developed for the 100<sup>th</sup>-anniversary celebration is shown as Figure 4. What is wrong with the timeline for Cooperative Extension? It leaves out 1906 when Campbell was appointed as the first Demonstration Extension Agent. Carver's move from Iowa to Tuskegee in 1896 is included in the timeline but left out is Booker T. Washington's pivotal leadership role in establishing the Farmers' Conference at Tuskegee University in 1892 and also Campbell's Leadership role as the USDA Negro Extension Field Agent for seven southern states: Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, and Oklahoma.

## What is wrong with the time line for Extension?

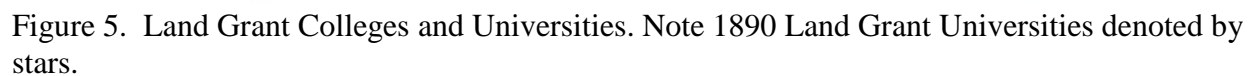


Figure 4. Timeline for the Cooperative Extension System Developed for the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration



In 2015, the land grant universities celebrate the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the 1890 Land Grant Universities. This event is sponsored by the Council of 1890 Presidents, Association of Research Directors, Association of Extension Administrators and the Council of 1890 Deans in partnership with USDA and private sector partners. Figure 5 shows the location of land-grant universities in the United States. The locations of the 1890 land-grant universities are represented by the stars. Funds provided to 1890 land grant universities for approved Agricultural research and Extension programs require matching funds from State legislatures. If matching funds are not provided federal funds can be withheld, except by a special waiver, granted by the Secretary of Agriculture. All 1862 land grant universities receive the required matching funds of at least 1:1 from states. In some states, 1862 land grant universities receive ratios as high as 17:1 (state to federal match). In spite of the federal requirement, the majority 1890 land grant universities do not receive the federally mandated matching funds from their corresponding state legislatures.





For more than a year, 1890 land grant university leadership has brought together teaching, research and extension faculty and staff resulting in three centers of excellence. These centers address three critical issues – profitability for small farmers, ranchers, and landowners; education of minority populations for STEAM careers; and international development. The “Center for Innovative and Sustainable Small Farms Ranches and Landowners” is designed to develop and strengthen small farmer clusters and cooperatives focused on fruits and vegetables and cattle profitability and related job creation and sustainability. Innovative components include development of mutually beneficial marketing and supplier partnerships; integrative research and Extension; participatory and adaptive research programs; students’ education and training, including high school, community college, Bachelors, Masters, and PhD degree levels. The second center is the Virtual Center to Motivate and Educate for Achievement. This center will focus on first generation college students, workforce pipeline centers, STEAM academies, 4-H STEM programs, and leadership academies. The third center is the Centre of Excellence for International Engagement and Development. This center will focus on satisfying the nation’s need for a diverse globally smart workforce, support for critical global development needs, trans-boundary research and education challenges. Collectively, the centers will develop a smart U.S. based and an international workforce including high school, undergraduate and graduate students in STEM/STEAM fields, and enhance internships with the private sector, government, and community-based organizations, including farmer clusters and international projects. An important part will be the farmer to farmer clusters sharing best practices. Science-based results

will serve to inform policy. Results will be published in archival journals and best practices disseminated. Recent reports from the USDA Economic Research Service show that most farmers in the United States are small farmers, and almost all of the small farmers do not make a profit. The profit in agriculture is huge, but it lies in the hands of the top 15% of farms.

Tuskegee University has worked closely with Walmart and other companies (supplier, transportation, and marketing) to provide commercial markets for clusters of small farmers so they could sell increased volumes of their produce and minimizing waste. This market serves as an alternative market to their current portfolio of markets, including the farmers market in their local communities, state markets in larger cities, where they have historically sold produce and recently, school systems and local restaurants. A critical part of this work has been that all the farmers involved have become Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) certified so that their produce can be sold in a variety of markets in the commercial sector. The key was developing effective partnerships over the last 4 years with tremendous results.

Figures 6, 7, and 8 show participants at 1951, 1989, and 2014 Professional Agricultural Workers Conferences (PAWCs). The predominance of participants in 1951 and 1989 was adults well into their careers. In the last few years, the number of young people participating has steadily increased. In this year's audiences, we have a mixture of young and older participants. This is a good sign that we are preparing the leadership for tomorrow who will continue Carver's goals to use science and agriculture to help his people and in so doing help the world.

Figure 6. PAWC Participants, 1951



Figure 7. PAWC Participants, 1989





Figure 8. Youth PAWC Participants, 2014

